

A [sample entry](#) from the

Encyclopedia of Religion and Nature

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Further Reading

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P Biocentric Religion – A Call for

Throughout the history of the human species, there has been a need for, and a continual quest for, a philosophy to rely upon, to have faith in, something to provide meaning, comfort, and answers to questions that have no answers.

When there is a need for a philosophy to justify existence it is called religion. It can be defined as a collection of ideas designed to give the appearance of substance to an illusion. All the religions of humanity are nothing more than a mask covering the face of nothingness.

Thus all religions are merely masks. A quest for meaning can never move behind the mask without negating the meaning of the mask.

Another way of describing religion is as a socially acceptable collective mass psychosis.

Gertrude Stein once remarked, “The answer is that there is no answer and that is the answer.”

We are finite creatures living in a universe of infinite space, time, dimension and undiscovered realities. The finite mind is incapable, and will always be incapable, of comprehending the infinite. We cannot finite the infinite.

Religion throughout human history has been the attempt to interpret infinity in finite terms. Since this is an impossibility, religion as a means of truly understanding the nature and meaning of existence is doomed to failure.

The most that religion can accomplish is to provide a crutch for the weak or lazy-minded to absolve guilt or to negate inquiry, and to serve as justification for the exercise of baser instincts like aggression, territoriality, ethnic cleansing, bigotry, or sociopathic perversions.

An examination of all the world’s major religions presents one very obvious flaw. They are all anthropocentric in structure. In a world populated by tens of millions of species of living things, all of humanity’s major religions focus exclusively on the superiority and divinity of the human species. All of them center themselves on a human being, be it a Christ, a Mohammed, a Buddha, or

gods whose forms are human. For example – Yahweh, Allah, or Krishna. Even the Hindu and Egyptian gods with the heads of elephants, jackals, and other animals still utilize the human form as the basis of the body concept. Extra arms, animal heads, or the addition of wings are merely attachments to the human form.

It is understandable that religion emerged with the evolution of primates and hominids. Primates are social creatures and tribal by nature.

The hominid primate became successful by building upon the tribal social structure and perfecting it through the introduction of a hierarchy that molds, rewards, and punishes its members. Tribal identification manifests itself primarily in aggressive territoriality. Territoriality breeds hostility to those outside the tribe and conformity fosters allegiance of the members within the tribe. Failure to conform is punished by being ostracized, banished, imprisoned, or killed.

The entire history of humanity is made up of offensive and defensive confrontations between tribal entities. This has evolved to the situation in the present day where the entire planet has been carved up into territorial domains ruled by tribes. In fact there is not one square inch of land on Earth that is not claimed by a human tribe. This obsession has become so extreme that, as an example, even a tiny remote uninhabitable outcropping of rock in the Southern Ocean is claimed by Great Britain and named Scott Island. People have even attempted to establish countries on abandoned oil platforms.

Thus it should not be a surprise to see an established religion having its God promise specific areas of land to a particular tribe. Such territorial establishment in the name of the divine is justification for the eradication of another tribe that disagrees with, or is ignorant of, the specific religious proclamation. The adherents of this particular philosophy see the genocide of the Canaanites by the Israelites under Joshua as legitimate murder.

Joshua was absolved of any guilt because he acted under the orders of a mythical being created for the express purpose of supporting tribal organization and expansion. This trend has continued through the centuries.

We saw German soldiers in World War II wearing belt buckles emblazoned with the words “*Gott mit Uns.*” In the present, we see suicide attacks in the name of Allah with the call of Jihad answered by a call for a Christian Crusade by the President of the United States.

Christians absolve themselves of guilt by proclaiming that their God was a man in mortal form who died for the “sins of humanity.” This is all well and good, but what exactly are the sins of humanity?

Christianity does not examine what the sins are, choosing to ignore them. But having had Christ die to have these vaguely defined sins forgiven, Christians have continued to wage war on both humanity and nature for two

thousand years. Christianity brilliantly fabricated a belief system to forgive all transgressions thereby absolving the human conscience of blame for tribalistic expansion. The genocide of the American Indians was justified and rationalized because these were unbelievers who had sinned by not believing in a Middle Eastern thunder god.

Christianity has itself split into numerous different tribes like Catholic, Protestant, Mormon, Methodist, and so many more.

Islam, Judaism and Buddhism have also splintered into tribes, as have all other religions. The reason for the splintering is primarily to justify a tribe's change of direction on political or ethical grounds. Anglicanism was created to justify the divorce of a British King. Reform Judaism was created to justify Zionism. Existing religions are sometimes altered or new religions created to accommodate what is essentially a personality cult. Examples are the Mormons under Joseph Smith, the Branch Davidians under David Koresh, or Scientology created by L. Ron Hubbard.

The one thing however that has been consistent and unchanging has been that all of humanity's religions are based on monkey-god spirituality. They all revere the anthropocentric concept, and the gods are all of human form. This is not surprising because humans created all the gods. What is surprising is that we still have not evolved out of this anthropocentric quagmire. And it is this failure to let go of the anthropocentric that will be our undoing. Even the belief in humanism, while denying a god, still projects humanity as central and looks for salvation through human science and logic.

Upon the altar of our monkey gods, we have been sacrificing species of plants and animals, and we have sacrificed our own children. For this reason, it is fitting that the foundation of the three great religions of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam begin with the Sumerian patriarch Abraham, who was willing to sacrifice his son Isaac to his God.

The adherents of these three religions continue to this day to sacrifice the living for the benefit of their belief systems.

For this reason we are in the midst of the largest mass extinction of species to occur in the last sixty-five million years. For this reason, we have stolen the carrying capacity of all other species and placed it under the domination of one species – ourselves. For this reason, we pump chemical pollutants into rivers, lakes, and our oceans. For this reason, we thoughtlessly expand our own numbers like lemmings racing toward the cliff of ecological disaster.

If we step back and look at ourselves objectively, what do we see? What I see is an overly self-glorified, conceited, naked ape that has become a divine legend in its own collective mind.

We exist in a world where we have collectively dismissed practically every other species, giving thought

only to those species that we have enslaved and labeled domestic. Our domestic cattle now outnumber all other ungulates combined. Our domestic dog and cat populations are greater in number than all the world's seal, wolf, lion, tiger, and jaguar populations combined. We have destabilized practically every ecosystem on Earth with the introduction of exotic species and the sheer weight of our ever-expanding human populations. We have created environments for the mutation of viruses by strengthening viral immune systems and removing natural limitation factors. By removing traditional hosts for some species of virus, we have offered ourselves as a new host for them to infect, and thus we have viral species jumping from species to species to survive, and many are attracted to our great numbers.

Our myths, religions, philosophies and beliefs have failed us. We forget that if the planetary ecosystem is weakened, we humans are also weakened. We forget that we are hominids, and hominids have not been overly successful, we being the last surviving species of hominid primate.

Our species possesses a great ability to forget and to adapt, and our selfishness allows us to ignore the consequences for the future of our actions in the present.

We have adapted to impure water. In 1970 clean water usually still came from a tap. Today we buy it in bottles and its value per liter is nearly four times that of gasoline. As fish species decline, we utilize advertising to make what was unappealing two decades ago into something worthwhile today. For example, the turbot was a fish with no commercial value when cod, haddock, and halibut were in abundance. Today it is turbot, mussels, or Pollock on the menu of Parisian or New York ritzy restaurants, and the traditionally more valuable fish have been forgotten. We are adapting to diminishment.

In 1950 the world's human population was three billion. It is today over six and a half billion, having doubled in a generation. The majority of these six and half billion are now under the age of twenty-five and this means another doubling by 2050 to thirteen billion and by 2100 to twenty-six billion. Yet the consequences of this are not even mentioned in the mass media because our religions call for the sanctity of human life and preach continued expansion as we replace quality of life for all species on Earth with quantity of human life to cover the planet. And despite the call for the sanctity of human life, we continue with the global mass slaughter of other humans through warfare, famine, disease, and civil strife.

What we need if we are to survive is a new story, a new myth, and a new religion. We need to replace anthropocentrism with biocentrism. We need to construct a religion that incorporates all species and establishes nature as sacred and deserving of respect.

Christians have denounced this idea as worshipping the creation and not the Creator. Yet in the name of the Creator, they have advocated the destruction of the creation.

What is true however is that we can know the creation; we can see it, hear it, smell it, feel it and experience it. We can also nurture and protect it. We cannot and we will never know the true story of the creation, most likely because there never was a creation. There is, always has, and always will be the infinite.

I reject the anthropocentric idea of custodianship. This is an idea that once again conveys human superiority, and quite frankly, we have always been lousy custodians.

Religions are based on rules, and we already have the rules in place for the establishment of a religion based on nature. These are the basic Laws of Ecology. It is a fact that throughout the entire history of the Earth, all species that have not lived within the bounds of the natural ecological laws have gone extinct. Those that have lived within the bounds have flourished with the exception of interference by other species that have upset the balance for all.

The first is the Law of Diversity. The strength of an ecosystem is dependent upon its diversity. The greatest threat to the planet's living species in the present is the escalating destruction of biological diversity. The primary reason for this can be found in the next three laws.

The second law is the Law of Interdependence. All species are interdependent upon each other. As Sierra Club founder John Muir once said, "When you tug on any part of the planet, you will find it intimately connected to every other part of the planet."

The third law is the Law of Finite Resources. There are limits to growth in every species because there are limits to carrying capacity of every ecosystem.

The fourth law of ecology is the Law that a Species must have Precedence over the interests of any individual, or group of individuals of any other species. This means that the rights of a species to survive must take precedence over the right of any individual or group to exploit the species beyond the law of finite resources.

What does this mean for humanity? It means that every human action must be guided by what potential consequences it will have on diversity, the availability of resources to all other species, relationships with all other species, and the rights of all other species.

The protection, conservation, and preservation of the Earth should be the foremost human concern. We must look upon the Earth, her ecosystems and species as sacred.

Anthropocentric culture has taught most of us to look upon anthropocentric beliefs as sacred. Thus it is considered blasphemy to spit upon the Black Stone in Mecca or to vandalize the Wailing Wall in Jerusalem or to desecrate a marble statue in the Vatican. If any person were to do any of these things, they would be dealt with quickly and violently, and anthropocentric society would applaud their murders or punishment as justifiable. Yet when loggers assault the sacredness of the forests of Amazonia, humanity says very little. When the Taliban destroyed two 800-year-old manmade Buddhist statues in Afghanistan,

the world was outraged, yet there has been relatively little protest over the wanton destruction of 3000-year-old living redwoods and sequoia trees in California.

We must develop a philosophy where a redwood tree is more sacred than a humanmade religious icon, where a species of bird or butterfly is of more value and deserving of more respect than the crown jewels of a nation, and where the survival of a species of cacti or flower is more important than the survival of a monument to human conceit like the pyramids.

With the laws of ecology as a foundation for a new biocentric, ecocentric worldview, we can then look at providing a sense of identity. Religious identity has been primarily tribal, dividing people into groups or cults at odds with each other. A biocentric identity is something completely different because it is all-encompassing.

An acceptance of interspecies equality allows a sense of planetary belonging. To be part of the whole is to be free of the alienation caused by an individual species like our own becoming divorced and alienated from the biospheric family of life.

With this revolutionary approach to forming a new religion, we have rules and we have a sense of belonging. Since the membership is multi-species and encompasses all ecosystems, there is no need for a church. The planet becomes its own church and the philosophy is uncontainable.

One thing however is left to make such a new story possible. That is a legacy, a reason to live and a reason to create and nurture.

That reason can be found in the Continuum.

The Continuum is a biocentric concept, understood by many indigenous cultures. It is living within the understanding of the connectedness of all things. All that came before and all that will come later are also one and the same. Past, present, and future are different stretches of the same river. Like the molecules of water in a river, the living beings of the past remain connected to the living beings of the future through the living beings of the present.

Anthropocentrism has taken humans out of step with the flow of time. There is no longer a connection to their ancestors nor do they feel kinship with their own children of the future. Kinship with all other species has virtually disappeared.

The Continuum is the guide for navigating the river of life. Without the Continuum, life has no direction and runs counter to the Ecological Laws guaranteeing ecological disorder.

A biocentrically oriented human naturally takes an interest in the people and species of the past. Anthropocentric people give little thought to the deeds and lives of their grandparents or in many cases, even their parents.

A biocentric perspective allows a vision into the future for it conveys an understanding of the connection to tomorrow. Thus thought is given to the consequences of

actions for generations to come because the knowledge of consequences is real. What we do today will determine the state of the planet a thousand years, ten thousand years, and a million years from today. The biocentric person loves not only the child of his or her own loins but also the baby, child, and adult who is birthed by the woman, who is reality by virtue of a direct link between the now and tomorrow.

Born of the Earth, we return to the Earth. The soil beneath our feet contains the material reality of the ancestors of all species. Without the collective, expired lives of the past, there would be less soil. For this reason, the soil itself is our collective ancestry, and thus the soil should be as sacred to us.

The water of the Earth is the blood of the planet and within its immensity will be found the molecules of water, which once enlivened the cells of our ancestors of all species. The water you drink once coursed through the blood of the dinosaurs, or was drunk by Precambrian ferns, or was expelled in the urine of a mastodon. Water has utilized the lives of all living things as part of its planetary circulatory system. All life contains water. Therefore water is sacred.

The air that we breathe has passed through countless respiratory systems and thus has been chemically stabilized by plants and animals. Without the lives that have gone before, there would be no air to breathe. The life of the past has nurtured the atmosphere. Therefore the air is sacred.

In fact, the air, the water, and the soil form the trinity of sacredness in a biocentric perspective.

Our lives in the present should be sacred to the living beings of the future.

I am advancing this idea of a new religion because we need to return to the garden of the natural world. We need to revolt against anthropocentric thought, this matrix-like cloak of homo-oriented values that mold our perceptions of our world in such a complex and perverse manner.

It is anthropocentric religious beliefs that have shaped us for nearly ten thousand years. But ten thousand years is nothing compared to the history of our species. Yes, these ten thousand years have given us technology, comfort, and superiority. It has also given us genocide, specicide and ecocide. The price has been high.

But now we are in a unique position to retain the positive discoveries of our venture into anthropocentrism and to reject the negative. The negative is primarily anthropocentric religious beliefs.

If we remove tribalism and anthropocentrism and if we adopt the guidance of the Continuum and live within the Laws of Ecology, we will find ourselves on a planet living harmoniously with millions of other species who we can, and should, call fellow Earthlings.

Captain Paul Watson

See *also*: Earth First! and the Earth Liberation Front; Greenpeace; Radical Environmentalism (and adjacent entry "Rodney Coronado and the Animal Liberation Front"); Watson, Paul – and the Sea Shepherd Conservation Society.

Biodiversity

The scientific concept of biodiversity has revolutionized biology, conservation, and related arenas in Western society since the 1980s. Biodiversity refers to the variety, variability, and processes of life at all levels from the genetic to the biosphere. However, usually the focus is on the number of species in an area or biome. (Biome refers to similar types of ecosystems, such as tropical rainforests.)

Many biologists, although operating mainly if not exclusively within the framework of Western science, variously recognize the mutual relevance of biodiversity and religion. As David Takacs writes:

By activism on behalf of what they call *biodiversity*, conservation biologists seek to redefine the boundaries of science and politics, ethics and religion, nature and our ideas about it. They believe that humans and other species with which we share the Earth are imperiled by an unparalleled ecological crisis, whose roots lie in an unheeded ethical crisis. *Biodiversity* is the rallying cry currently used by biologists to draw attention to this crisis and to encapsulate the Earth's myriad species and biological processes, as well as a host of values ascribed to the natural world. An elite group of biologists aims to forge a new ethic, in which biodiversity's multiplicity of values will be respected, appreciated, and perhaps even worshipped (1996: 9).

Takacs identifies spiritual value as among the several different kinds of values of biodiversity, based on interviews with numerous prominent biologists (1996: 254–70). Most of them, speaking as scientists, would not admit to being religious in the sense of ascribing to any particular religious tradition or organization. However, many of them admitted to having extraordinary experiences during their field research in nature that they variously identified as a sense of wonder, awe, joy, exhilaration, tranquility, reverence, mystery, or spirituality. (Most distinguish between religion as a social institution and spirituality as an individual experience.) Takacs concludes:

Some biologists have found their own brand of religion, and it is based on biodiversity. The biologists portrayed here attach the label *spiritual* to deep, driving feelings they can't understand, but that give their lives meaning, impel their